

Exchange Report



AALTO University

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Spring 2017

Monthly Log

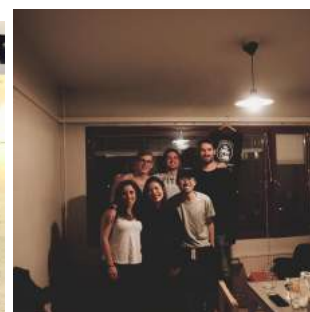
1. January

The first month is general is meeting new friends and getting used to the life in Finland. With Finland having one of the highest concentration of national parks in the world, I went to visit the Nuuksio National Park with some friends and had a barbeque there which was a lot of fun.



2. February

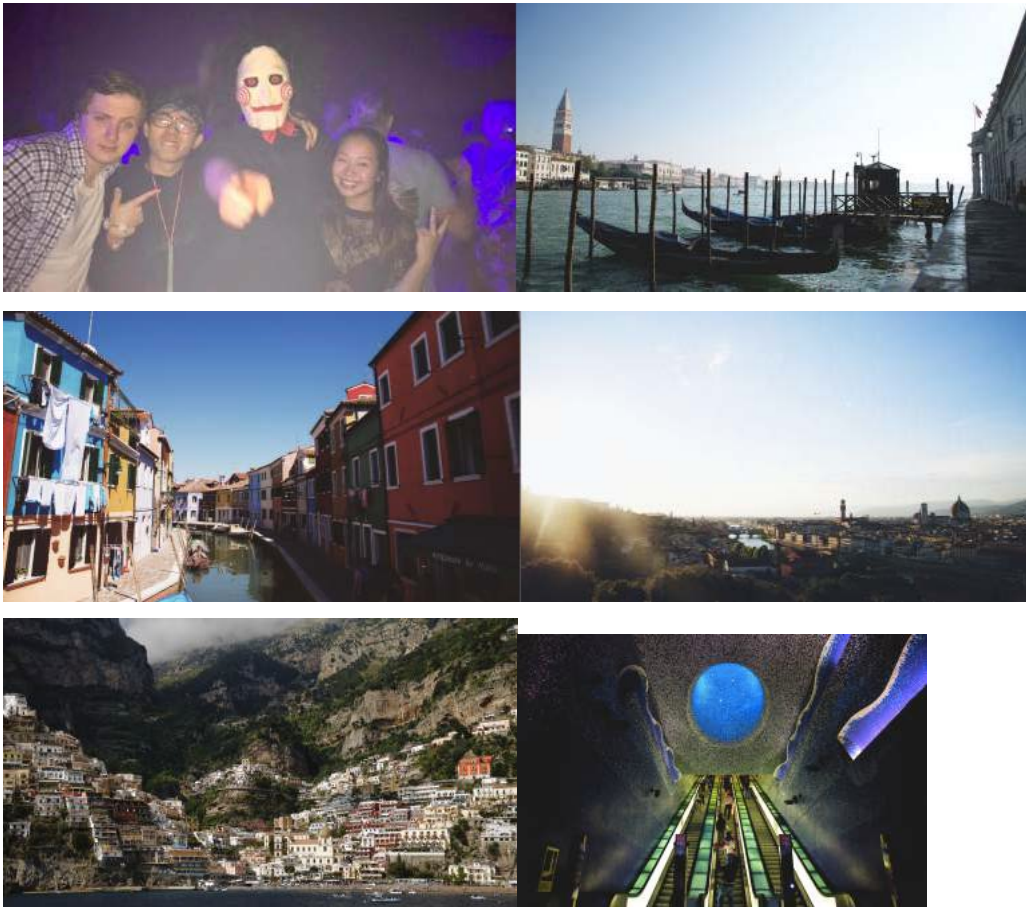
The highlight for the month is the trip to Lapland in the Arctic Circle, which averages -25 degree Celsius. I am glad that I saw the northern light and participated in activities like Husky rides and generally had a great time. I also visited Suomenlinna, a UNESCO world heritage site at Helsinki along with some friends, in which I can further my interest in photography. At the end of the months, I also visited the Baltic States with some friends which I absolutely recommend everyone to go since they are hidden gems where the living cost is low and have amazing culture.



3. March - April

These two months are filled in travelling with some friends from exchange, some friends back from Hong Kong and visiting my exchange buddy who studies not in Finland but in Copenhagen and finishing assignments during trips since I have chosen to take many self-learning courses. There are lots of night buses and sleeping at the airport involved but they are definitely worth it. I have attended some music festivals and parties in many cities in the Scandinavian Region (Copenhagen, Malmo,

Stockholm, Oslo) to Austria (Vienna), Italy (Amalfi, Positano, Sorrento, Capri Island, Napoli, Rome) and Germany (Berlin, Munich, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Wiesbaden)



4. May - June

In May, I went back to Helsinki to do some studying and finished my examinations. Then, I hopped over to Paris and Russia to see some of my local friends there in Paris and Moscow alongside a combination of friends back at HKUST and some friends met on exchange (from Chile and Vietnam). Russia ended up to be one of my favorite destinations I have ever been to on exchange. As a fashion enthusiast, the fashion and culture there are very interesting and people are so very nice and are very shocked and would come up to talk to me and my friends since they find it very interesting that three Asians would visit their city.

At the same time, I participated in the student festival in Helsinki called Vappu and had an absolute blast with picnics. As it goes to the end of May, there are lots of farewells and I finally ended my exchange in Copenhagen attending a street music festival alongside my exchange buddy from Copenhagen Business School and their

friends and had a blast before coming back to Hong Kong early June to start my internship.



General Exchange Information

1. Visa procedures

As an exchange student, it is best for you to apply for a residence permit instead of a visa, which on average is going to take 2-3 weeks, complimentary with buffer time, a month. You can visit the Consulate General of Finland located in Central once the

confirmation email from Aalto University has been sent to you. Submit the necessary documents online and post-approval, schedule a time to submit certain documents in person and pick it up when you get an email notification from the Consulate.

2. Orientation Activities

While there were 2 orientations in the Toolo Campus and Otaniemi Campus, focusing on academic-related information and general admission information respectively. It is not compulsory to attend the orientation since the time may clash with class time and all the information will later be uploaded online.

3. International Services & Activities

All services and activities are open to international students, despite some being organized in Finnish. Instead of checking your email, frequent the Facebook page of different student associations to check out the different events that are going to be organized every week. For example, there are usually lots of sauna-related events and sit-sit every week in Otaniemi. Just talk to locals and join some WhatsApp group to get informed on the activities and participate along with some friends.

4. Accommodations

While finding an accommodation maybe daunting, there are a lot of support provided by the school. You can visit DOMO and choose the type of housing you would like to stay depending on their fee, location. If possible, choose Pasila as the priority since it has been recently renovated and its highly accessible location and great density of social activities.

5. Course Registration

Read the course information on the Aalto website carefully and register the course via WebOodi. Unlike HKUST, there is no add-drop period nor maximum quantity of courses you can apply for. One thing to note is the language and the format of the course since some of them are hosted in Finnish and some of them are self-learning courses without any lecture. At the same, the WebOodi is utilized for registering

examinations and you have to be sure to register for them at least 1 week before the examination date.

6. Teaching & Assessment Methods

I have taken a total of 7 courses across my exchange which is quite a lot and the teaching and assessment methods of different courses have great variation - some focusing greatly on pre-readings and some focusing heavily on presentations and in-class participation. The tip I would give is that read very carefully on the format and assessment method prior to registering since the workloads can have great divergence as well among courses. If necessary, don't hesitate to message the lecturer or the teaching assistant since they are very willing to answer all your enquiries.

7. Sports & Recreation Facilities

Similar to HKUST, you can join the sports facility organization called UniSports to utilize all of the available facilities on campus and even participate in competitions representing the school as well for a fixed amount of fee.

8. Cost/Expense

While the cost in Helsinki is relatively high when compared to other European cities, it is comparatively lower than Hong Kong. One important tip I would give to incoming students are that learn how to cook before going since eating out can rack up to a decent sum. Learn how to cook decent food - not only is it a great way for you to bond with your roommate but it definitely saves a large sum of your cost of living.

9. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There are a myriad of student associations - despite being a business students, also keep an out for activities organized by engineering-oriented students associations and also other student associations from other university e.g. Helsinki University. They organize a range of events - ranging from pub-crawls to sauna activities and short and long trips. Personally, I would recommend participating in one particular

pub-crawl called Hukkaputki which is the largest pub crawl for Finland. You will for sure have a memorable time there since you will be able to socialize with a great deal of local and international students and adults.

10. Health & Safety

Bring a few medicines from home for common cold and flu. In terms of safety, Helsinki, as part of the Nordic region, is one of the safest cities in the world. Even at late hours, it is very safe to go home. Similar to other cities, just be aware of your surroundings if you are alone and it will all be fine.

11. Food

School lunch is 2.7 Euro per meal if you have your student card due to the sponsorship from the government. However, eating out in general would cost you around 10 Euros so similar to the aforementioned, be sure to learn how to cook to save some money on food.

12. Transportation

The transportation in Helsinki is very convenient in Helsinki since it is a relatively a small city, focusing on metro, buses and trams. The cost depends on the area you live since if you live in Espoo (also where the Otaniemi Campus is located), you should purchase the monthly ticket for both zone 1 and zone 2. However, if you live in Helsinki, you would only need to purchase the monthly pass for zone 1 which cost around 30 Euros per month.

13. Climate

This is where the Finnish stereotype comes in where the weather is generally quite cold, ranging from -5 to -20 degree Celsius. While it is warmer during April and May, it is still around 5-10 degrees so be sure to bring enough clothing.

14. Communication

While Finnish is the dominant language, most people speak fluent English. However, if you can, pick up a few Finnish phrases in case of emergency or just as a friendly gesture.

15. Cautionary Measures

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16. Others

Since most students would go travelling when they are on exchange. Be aware of cheap buses and cruises since Russia is reachable by bus via Helsinki and Sweden and the Baltic States (Estonia; Latvia; Lithuania) can be reachable via a cruise.

Items to Bring (Checklist)

1. Winter clothing especially warm inners if you are thinking of going to the Arctic Circle
2. Sufficient cash in case of delays and other accidents
3. Spring winter
4. Medicine
5. Laptop & Stationary
6. Camera
7. Miscellaneous chargers and adaptors
8. Residence Permit & Acceptance Letter
9. Something local from Hong Kong to share with foreign friends
10. Wifi routers and other household items can be purchased from IKEA on the first week

Useful Links and Contacts

1. Visa Application Website: enterfinland.fi/eServices
2. DOMO Accommodation application website: domo.ayy.fi
3. AALTO University website: into.aalto.fi/display/fi/Etusivu
4. WebOODi course registration: oodi.aalto.fi/
5. KY-Sub (Student association targeted for exchange students):
<https://www.facebook.com/KYSub/>